

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for wireless communications, said apparatus comprising:
 - (a) means for wirelessly communicating with a base station in accordance with a first protocol that permits said apparatus to function as a
5 telephone;
 - (b) means for permitting a user to designate a telephone number for a remote device that the user desires to contact;
 - (c) means for identifying an access telephone number that is
different than the telephone number;
 - 10 (d) means for providing the access telephone number to the base station, in accordance with the first protocol, so as to indicate that a connection is desired with a routing system corresponding to the access telephone number; and
 - (e) means for providing the telephone number to the routing
15 system in accordance with a second protocol, so as to indicate that a connection is desired with the remote device.
2. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said means (c) and (e) are included within a subscriber identity module (SIM) in said apparatus.
3. An apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said SIM also stores subscriber information for plural different mobile networks.
4. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said means (c) identifies the access telephone number based on at least one of a current telephone number for said apparatus and a current location of said apparatus.
5. An apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:
 - (f) means for analyzing the telephone number; and

(g) means for activating said means (d) and (e) only if the telephone number satisfies a predetermined condition.

6. An apparatus according to Claim 5, wherein the predetermined condition includes a criterion based on amount of toll charges for placing a call to the telephone number directly via the base station.

7. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the second protocol comprises a short message service (SMS) protocol.

8. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the telephone number is provided to the routing system by transmitting the telephone number to the base station via a channel used for signaling.

9. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the telephone number is provided to the routing system by transmitting the telephone number to the base station via a channel used for data communications between said apparatus and the routing system.

10. An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said means (e) provides the telephone number to the routing system after the connection has been established.

11. An apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising:
(f) means for registering with said base station to accept incoming telephone calls.

12. An apparatus according to Claim 11, further comprising:
(g) means for, shortly after registering by said means (f), transmitting a message to the routing system, said message indicating that said apparatus is so registered.

13. A subscriber identity module (SIM) for insertion into a wireless device, said SIM comprising:

a memory for storing data and computer-executable process steps;

and

5 a processor for executing said process steps and for accessing said data, said process steps comprising steps to:

(a) input a telephone number;

(b) input an instruction to call the telephone number;

(c) identify an access telephone number that is different than
10 the telephone number;

(d) cause the wireless device to establish a connection to a routing system corresponding to the access telephone number; and

(e) cause the wireless device to transmit the telephone number to the routing system in a manner so as to indicate that a connection is
15 desired with a remote device corresponding to the telephone number.

14. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein the data stored in said memory include subscriber information for plural different mobile networks.

15. A SIM according to Claim 14, wherein said process steps further comprise steps to:

(f) input location information indicating where the wireless device is located; and

5 (g) cause the wireless device to register with one of said different mobile networks, said one being selected based on the location information.

16. A SIM according to Claim 14, wherein said process steps further comprise a step to:

(f) cause the wireless device to download information to update said subscriber information.

17. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein the access telephone number is identified in step (c) based on at least one of a current telephone number for said wireless device and a current location of said wireless device.

18. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein said process steps further comprise a step to:

(f) cause said wireless device to register with a base station to accept incoming telephone calls.

19. A SIM according to Claim 18, wherein said process steps further comprise a step to:

(g) shortly after registering in step (f), transmit a message to the routing system, said message indicating that said wireless device is so
5 registered.

20. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein said step (e) causes the wireless device to transmit the telephone number to the routing system using a short message service (SMS) protocol.

21. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein said step (e) causes the wireless device to transmit the telephone number to the routing system by transmitting the telephone number to a base station via a channel used for signaling.

22. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein said step (e) causes the wireless device to transmit the telephone number to the routing system by transmitting the telephone number to a base station via a channel used for data communications between said wireless device and the routing system.

23. A SIM according to Claim 13, wherein said step (e) causes the wireless device to transmit the telephone number to the routing system after the connection has been established.

24. A method for facilitating telephone-based communications, said method comprising:

- (a) assigning a contact telephone number to each of plural subscribers;
- 5 (b) receiving from a particular subscriber from among the plural subscribers an electronic message that has been formatted in accordance with an established protocol, said message identifying a current telephone number for the particular subscriber;
- (c) receiving a telephone call on the contact telephone number
- 10 for the particular subscriber; and
- (d) automatically forwarding the telephone call to the current telephone number by dialing the current telephone number.

25. A method according to claim 24, wherein step (d) further comprises routing the telephone call to a local device prior to dialing the current telephone number.

26. A method according to claim 24, wherein the particular subscriber communicates using a wireless device that stores access information for plural different wireless networks, and wherein said method further comprises a step of downloading to said wireless device updating information to update said access

5 information.

27. A method according to claim 26, wherein said updating information includes information regarding how to transmit the electronic message of step (b) via a specific one of the wireless networks.

28. A method according to claim 26, wherein said updating information includes access information for an additional wireless network.

29. A method according to claim 26, further comprising a step of downloading electronic cash to said wireless device.

30. A method according to claim 26, further comprising a step of downloading an audio file to said wireless device.

31. A method according to claim 24, further comprising steps of maintaining a database of geographic information that includes geographic positions of at least some of the plural subscribers and providing said geographic information on request.

32. A method according to claim 24, further comprising a step of maintaining a subscriber database that includes contact telephone numbers, connection statuses and current telephone numbers for said plural subscribers.

33. A method according to claim 32, further comprising a step of updating the subscriber database based on messages received in the established protocol.

34. A method according to claim 33, further comprising steps of identifying contact telephone numbers for incoming telephone calls and routing each said incoming telephone call to the current telephone number associated with the contact telephone number for said each incoming telephone call in the
5 subscriber database.

35. An apparatus for insertion into a wireless device, said apparatus comprising:

- (a) means for inputting a telephone number;
- (b) means for inputting an instruction to call the telephone
5 number;
- (c) means for identifying an access telephone number that is different than the telephone number;
- (d) means for causing the wireless device to establish a connection to a routing system corresponding to the access telephone number;
- 10 and

(e) means for causing the wireless device to transmit the telephone number to the routing system in a manner so as to indicate that a connection is desired with a remote device corresponding to the telephone number.

36. An apparatus for facilitating telephone-based communications, said apparatus comprising:

(a) means for assigning a contact telephone number to each of plural subscribers;

5 (b) means for receiving from a particular subscriber from among the plural subscribers an electronic message that has been formatted in accordance with an established protocol, said message identifying a current telephone number for the particular subscriber;

(c) means for receiving a telephone call on the contact telephone
10 number for the particular subscriber; and

(d) means for automatically forwarding the telephone call to the current telephone number by dialing the current telephone number.

37. An apparatus for communicating over plural different communications networks, said apparatus comprising:

(a) means for storing login information for plural different telephone communications networks;

5 (b) means for selecting one of the plural different telephone communications networks;

(c) means for, automatically in response to the selecting by said means (b), logging into the telephone communications network selected in step (b) so as to allow said apparatus to receive and initiate telephone calls;

10 (d) means for, automatically in response to the selecting by said means (b), transmitting a message via the telephone communications network selected in step (b) to an entity that is not a part of the telephone communications network selected in step (b),

wherein the message sent in step (d) identifies a telephone number
15 at which said apparatus is reachable while logged into the telephone
communications network selected in step (b), and
wherein the message is sent according to a pre-established
protocol.

38. An apparatus according to claim 37, further comprising means for
allowing a user of said apparatus to cause steps (b) through (d) to be repeated,
with a different one of the plural different telephone communications networks
being selected at each said repetition of step (b).